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RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 2211
RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU 0668
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 8747
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 1484
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 6185
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHHJJAA/JICPAC HONOLULU HI
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 002517

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: BATTLE FOR LEGISLATIVE SEATS HEATS UP AS
REGISTRATION PERIOD CLOSES

REF: A. TAIPEI 02511

[1](#)B. TAIPEI 01066

Classified By: AIT Deputy Director Robert S. Wang,
Reasons: 1.4 (b/d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Taiwan's January 2008 legislative election season officially kicked off with the close of candidate registration on November 20. Nearly 300 candidates have registered to run for 73 district and 6 aborigine seats. Another 132 candidates have registered to represent their parties in the competition for 34 at-large party list seats. Despite a large number of minor party candidates, the elections will primarily be a contest between the two major parties--the ruling DPP and the opposition KMT--for control of the legislature. The KMT is widely expected to retain control of the Legislative Yuan (LY), boosting the percentage of seats it holds and quite possibly winning an outright majority. End Summary.

Candidates Complete Registration

[1](#)2. (SBU) Taiwan's legislative election season kicked off with the close of candidate registration on November 20. A total of 296 candidates registered to run for the 73 district and 6 aborigine seats. Another 132 candidates registered to represent their parties in the competition for 34 at-large party seats. Candidates and parties are already ramping up their campaign activities in the run-up to the January 12, 2008 legislative elections. Taiwan election authorities will hold a lottery on December 19 to assign numbers to candidates that determine their placement on the ballots. Public debates and fora for candidates to air and discuss their policies are planned for January 2-11.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Most local observers see the legislative elections as a test of strength between the two major parties--the ruling DPP and opposition KMT. The KMT is widely expected to win the largest number and perhaps a majority of the seats and to retain control of the new legislature. The vote on January 12 will also mark Taiwan's transition to a new legislative election system that halves the total number of legislators to 113 and establishes 73 new election districts with single representatives. Indigenous peoples will cast ballots for 6 additional seats reserved for plains and

mountain aborigines running in island-wide districts. The remaining 34 at-large seats will be allocated among the political parties based on the proportion of votes they receive on a second ballot for party preference (reftels).

KMT Sets Goal of 70 Seats

14. (SBU) At the close of registration on November 19 the KMT had nominated 70 candidates to run in 69 districts, choosing not to field people in four districts where KMT-allied, Non-Partisan Solidarity Union (NPSU) candidates are running. Four KMT candidates also registered to compete for the 6 seats allocated to aborigines. The KMT has put forward 34 candidates to compete for the 34 available at-large party representational slots. The KMT aims to win at least 68 of the 113 total seats, and party officials have expressed hope for a good showing on election day that will enable the party to surpass 70 seats.

DPP Revises Initial 50-Seat Estimate Upward

15. (C) The DPP has nominated 69 candidates to run in 69 districts, 2 candidates for the aborigine seats, and it has also put forward a list of 34 candidates to compete for the at-large party representative slots. President Chen had initially set the party's sights on winning 50 seats, but the DPP yesterday predicted it will surpass the earlier goal and is now aiming at 60 seats. Party officials expect the defection of several Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) local candidates to the DPP in recent weeks will boost the party's overall prospects. By raising public predictions, the DPP

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may also be seeking to bolster morale and counter perceptions that it may lose badly to the KMT in the legislative elections.

Small Parties Pin Hopes on Second Party Ballot

16. (SBU) A total of 15 minor parties registered candidates in district races and 11 small parties also nominated people for the at-large party representational seats. The most significant of these parties, the pan-Green TSU, has 13 registered district candidates, mostly graduates from the Lee Teng-hui School, and 15 at-large candidates. The TSU hopes to win 10 percent of the party list vote, which would give it four seats. The Civic Party, Green Party, NSU, Hakka Party, Third Society Party, Red Party, and Constitution Party each fielded at least 10 district candidates, which allows them to compete for the second at-large party ballot. The pan-Blue New Party did not field any district candidates but nevertheless qualified to put forward 10 at-large candidates because it garnered at least 2 percent of the popular vote in one of the three previous legislative elections.

17. (C) Despite fielding some district candidates, the smaller parties, including the TSU, are placing their hopes on garnering enough votes on the party preference ballot to qualify for at-large party seats. Many of these parties, however, are in direct competition with each other for the same, small slice of a primarily urban voting public dissatisfied with DPP and KMT partisan politics. The large number of "third parties" complicates their already uphill battle to win at least 5 percent of the party ballot, the minimum threshold to qualify for at-large party seats under the new legislative election system. Their task will be made even harder if the DPP and KMT are able to convince the public to vote for them rather than waste their ballots on a lost cause.

Comment

18. (C) As the legislative campaigns heat up, the DPP and KMT will be competing for maximum advantage in the new legislature and also to boost support for their presidential tickets. Some on both sides will seek to cast the legislative elections as a KMT-DPP showdown. However, an individual candidate's local reputation, personal appeal, connections, and constituent services are often more important to voters than party affiliation. Therefore, the outcome of the legislative elections will not necessarily be an indicator of how the presidential election will turn out.
YOUNG